

Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-05 L-01

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-20

USIA-06 AID-05 DPW-01 IO-04 DRC-01 /068 W

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R 151055Z OCT 74

FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9550

INFO AMCONSUL BIEN HOA

AMCONSUL CAN THO

AMCONSUL DANANG

AMCONSUL NHA TRANG

CINCPAC

USDEL JEC PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 13233

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT VS

SUBJ: STORMY LOWER HOUSE SESSION REELECTS CHRMN CAN

1. LOWER HOUSE CHRMN NGUYEN BA CAN WAS REELECTED CHRMN FOR THE 1974-75 LEGISLATIVE PERIOD AT A STORMY LOWER HOUSE SESSION OCT 14. A PRO-GOVT SLATE OF LOWER HOUSE OFFICIALS AND COMITE CHAIRMEN WAS ELECTED AT THE SAME SESSION. THE OPPOSITON SLATES, PARTIALLY BACKED BY PRO-GOVT DEPUTIES, WITHDREW AT THE LAST MINUTE, AND CAN WAS ELECTED BY 74 VOTES; A MAJORITY OF THOSE PRESENT AND VOTING BUT SLIGHTLY SHORT OF AN ABSOLUTE MAJORITY (79) OF LOWER HOUSE MEMBERSHIP.

2. INITIAL CHALLENGE TO CAN'S LEADERSHIP RAISED BY FORMER HOUSE SPEAKER NGUYEN BA LUONG, REPORTEDLY BACKED BY PEOPLE'S SOCIETY BLOC (PSB--27 DEPUTIES) AND NATIONAL GROUP (NG--11 DEPUTIES). ADDITIONALLY, LUONG HOPED TO ATTRACT DISSIDENT PRO-GOVT DEPUTIES. DURING HIS PREVIOUS CHAIRMANSHP, LUONG
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WAS NOTED FOR WEAK AND INEFFECTUAL LEADERSHIP, WHICH LEFT BLOCS

WIDE FREEDOM OF ACTION. THUS, HE COULD HARDLY BE EXPECTED CONTROL ROWDY OPPOSITION ELEMENTS IN PSB AND NG AND PRESUMABLY ATTRACTED THEIR SUPPORT FOR THAT REASON. PSB LEADER TRAN VAN TUYEN HAS CALLED FOR IMPEACHMENT PRES THIEU AND CLEARLY HAS PERSONAL AMBITIONS, WHILE NG DEPUTIES HAVE BEEN IN FOREFRONT ANTI-CORRUPTION MOVEMENT.

3. WEEK BEFORE ELECTIONS, TUYEN DEMANDED CHANGE IN LOWER HOUSE RULES WHICH PRESENTLY PROVIDE FOR ROLL CALL VOTE FOR BLOC LISTS WHICH INCLUDE ALL LOWER HOUSE OFFICIALS AND COMITE CHARIMEN. HE CHARGED SUCH RULES CONVERTED HOUSE TO UNDEMOCRATIC MOUTHPIECE FOR INDEPENDENCE PALACE, DEMANDED CHANGE TO AND INDIVIDUAL VOTE BY SECRET BALLOT FOR EACH PSOTION AND THREATENED BOYCOTT ELECTIONS IF CHANGE REFUSED. TUYEN, IN FACT, WAS NOT PRESENT DURING OCT 14 PROCEEDINGS.

4. LUONG SLATE NEVER FORMALLY FILED, PRESUMABLY BECAUSE FELL SHORT OF NECESSARY SUPPORT. THIS PROBABLY PARTLY DUE TO DEVELOPING CANDIDACY DEPUTY NHAN MINH TRANG, LEADER OF PEROPLE'S RIGHTS GROUP (PR--19 DEPUTIES). TRANG, WHO IS ALSO MEMBER PROGRESSIVE NATIONALIST MOVEMENT (PNM), REPORTEDLY COMPETED SUCCESSFULLY WITH DEP LUONG FOR SUPPORT OF DISSIDENT PR-GOVT DEPUTIES FROM INDEPENDENCE AND REPUBLIC BLOCS, AND EMB SOURCE STATES LUONG COMPLAINED BITTERLY OF TRANG'S "TREACHERY". TRANG, HOWEVER, WAS REFUSED SUPPORT OF PSB AND NG DEPUTIES AND, AT LAST MOMENT, ALSO DECIDED TO WITHDRAW.

5. ACCORDING CHINH LUAN OCT 13, CHRMN CAN WAS TARGET OF CHARGES OF CORRUPTION BY DISSIDENT, PRO-GOVT BLOC MEMBERS AT MEETING OF THESE DEPUTIES ON OCT 12. CHARGES WERE ECHOED BY PSB AND NG DEPUTIES, AND CHRMN CAN IS REPORTED TO HAVE ANNOUNCED IN REPLY THAT HE WOULD ASK INSPECTORATE GENERAL TO INVESTIGATE CHARGES.

6. TRANG ISSUED COMMUNIQUE WITHDRAWING FROM CONTEST MORNING OF OCT 14 SESSION. SESSION WAS THEN MARKED BY CONTINUED DISORDERS WITH MEMBERS OF PSB, NG AND PR DEPUTIES REPEATEDLY SEEKING SEIZE ROSTRUM TO DENOUNCE HOUSE LEADERSHIP FOR CORRUPTION AND REFUSAL AMEND RULES, FORCING REPEATED RECESSES OF PROCEEDINGS. CHRMN CAN'S DESK WAS KNOCKED OVER AND SPATTERED

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WITH PAINT IN ONE MELEE, AND PRO-GOVT DEPUTIES FORMED RING TO PHYSICALLY PROTECT CHRMN AT ANOTHER POINT. FINALLY, CHRMN CAN SUCCEEDED IN ANNOUNCING WITHDRAWAL TRANG SLATE AT 3:30 THAT AFTERNOON AND RECESSED HOUSE ONCE AGAIN. PR LEADER, DEP TRAN MINH NHUT, THEN TOOK FLOOR, DENOUNCED GOVT ONCE AGAIN, AND HE AND DEP TRANG LED GROUP OF DEPUTIES FROM HOUSE TO PICKET INDEPENDENCE PALACE TO PROTEST PROCEEDINGS.

7. LOWER HOUSE RECONVENED AT ABOUT 6:45 MONDAY EVENING. VOTING ON UNCONTESTED CAN LIST RECORDED 70 VOTES ON FIRST BALLOT; SHORT OF REQUIRED ABSOLUTE MAJORITY OF HOUSE MEMBERSHIP (79). HOUSE RULES REQUIRE ONLY MAJORITY OF THOSE PRESENT AND VOTING TO ELECT ON SECOND ROLL CALL. VOTE REACHED 74, AND CAN SLATE DECLARED ELECTED. REPORTEDLY, 22 PRO-GOVT DEPUTIES WERE ABSENT AT THE TIME OF FINAL ROLL CALL.

8. COMMENT: CHRMN CAN HAD PREVIOUSLY REFUSED PREDICT HIS REELECTION OF EMBOFF AND HAD EXPRESSED CONCERN OVER FAILING DEMOCRACY PARTY (DP) DISCIPLINE. HE ATTRIBUTED THIS TO DISMISSAL NGUYEN VAN NGAN, WITHDRAWAL MILITARY OFFICERS AND CIVIL SERVANTS FROM PROVINCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE OF DEMOCRACY PARTY, SERIOUS DIFFICULTIES IN FINDING REPLACEMENTS FOR THESE LOSSES AMONG LOCAL LEADERSHIP, REDUCED FUNDING OF PARTY AND GENERALLY LOWER SUPPORT AND PRIORITY FOR PARTY ACTIVITIES. CAN SAW A STORMY 1974-75 LEGISLATURE, AND HIS PREDICTIONS DID NOT WAIT LONG FOR FULFILLMENT.

9. A SPLIT HAS DEVELOPED IN THE PRO-GOVT BLOC IN THE LOWER HOUSE. 22 PRO-GOVT DEPUTIES ABSENTED THEMSELVES FROM THE FINAL VOTING, BUT IT IS TOO EARLY TO JUDGE WHETHER THEY WILL RETURN TO THE FOLD. NEVERTHELESS, GOVT LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM, ESPECIALLY PENDING AMENDMENTS OF CONTROVERSIAL DECREE LASW 007(PRESS), 004(STRIKE), AND 060(POLITICAL PARTIES), NO DOUBT WILL FACE FURTHER CONTENTIOUS SESSIONS, WITH OPPOSITION PUSHING GOVT FOR GREATER LIBERALIZATION THAN PROPOSED.

10. LUONG CANDIDACY PROBABLY REFLECTS LARGER AMBITIOUS PSB LEADER TRAN VAN TUYEN, AS WELL AS CHAOTIC TENDENCIES NATIONAL GROUP DEPUTIES, WHILE TRANG CANDIDACY CLEARLY SEEN AS MOVE BY PNM LEADER NGUYEN NGOC HUY TO IMPROVE HIS POSITION. HUY RECENTLY ALLOWED EMBOFFS RETAIN IMPRESSION HE WAS POSSIBLE
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1975 PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE.

11. ELECTION FOR UPPER HOUSE OFFICIALS SCHEDULED FOR OCT 17. WHILE UPPER HOUSE OFFICIALS ARE ELECTED BY SLATE, COMITE CHAIRMEN ARE ELECTED BY INDIVIDUAL VOTE, MAKING ACCOMMODATION OPPOSITION AMBITIONS EASIER. ALSO, OPPOSITION IN UPPER HOUSE IS WEAKER AND LESS OBSTREPEROUS, AND CHRMN TRAN VAN LAM HAS TOLD US HE EXPECTS NO SURPRISES.
MARTIN

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